GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

BY ARCHIBALD HENDERSON.

SOME time ago, in a letter to M. Augustin Filon, I expressed my regret that he had never committed himself upon the unsafe subject of Mr. Bernard Shaw. Although M. Filon's "The English Stage" was published in 1897, it contains no reference to Mr. Shaw as a dramatist; yet the omission was scarcely an oversight. While a number of Mr. Shaw's plays had by that time already been produced in England, the "Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant," in two volumes, were not published until May, 1898. Owing to many contradictory aspects of Mr. Shaw, M. Filon found it no easy matter to form a just opinion of him; but, at last gathering courage for the daring act, he wrote a long and penetrating critique for the "*Revue des Deux Mondes.*"* This essay, he afterwards graciously wrote me, was due in no small measure to my suggestion. The real reason, however, for the appearance of such an article was the remarkable prominence so suddenly gained by Mr. Shaw as a dramatic artist, and the clamorous demands by the most cultured of London's playgoers for the production of his principal plays. Mr. Shaw was thus "canonized" in France; his genius had been recognized in Great Britain a few months before by an exhaustive and highly sympathetic essay in the safe and sane "Edinburgh Review."† These two able appreciations were not merely adventitious tributes to Mr. Shaw's genius; they were, so to speak, barometric indications of the state of the literary atmosphere. As produced by Mr. Arnold Daly and Mr. Robert Loraine, a number of Mr. Shaw's best known plays achieved a gratifying measure of popular success in the United States — a popular success unparalleled even by Mr.

* "*M. Bernard Shaw et son Théâtre*," November, 1905.
† "The Plays of Mr. Bernard Shaw," April, 1905.

Richard Mansfield's rarely artistic productions of "Arms and the Man" and "The Devil's Disciple" of the previous decade.

These various tributes to the signal abilities of Mr. Shaw, both as literary artist and as popular dramatist, were in themselves sufficient to stamp him as a notable figure in the pantheon of contemporary letters. But unto all these things was added the final seal of authority, the production of his plays upon the greatest stages of German Europe. Late in 1902 the translation into German of three of his plays appeared from the pen of Herr Siegfried Trebitsch, the Viennese novelist and dramatist; and, shortly afterwards, Dr. Georg Brandes, among the two or three greatest living literary critics, hailed the advent into European circles of "the most advanced of contemporary British dramatists." The brilliant Viennese dramatist, the author of "*Der Apostel,*" Herr Hermann Bahr, wrote an epochal critique of Mr. Shaw and his works, which went far to assure Mr. Shaw a gracious hearing in Vienna. "*Ein Teufelskerl*" ("The Devil's Disciple") was produced at the Raimund Theatre, Vienna, on February 25th, 1903; "*Der Schlachtenlenker*" ("The Man of Destiny") at the Schauspielhaus, Frankfort a. M., on April 21st; "Candida" at the Königliches Schauspielhaus, Dresden, on November 19th. That greatest of modern actor-managers, Max Reinhardt, produced "Candida" and "*Der Schlachtenlenker*" at the Neues Theatre, Berlin, in the spring of 1904, Germany's leading actress, Agnes Sorma, assuming the principal feminine rôles. Mr. Shaw's plays continued to appear upon some of the most artistic stages of Germany and Austria; Candida was interpreted by Sorma, Petri and Salbach, Bluntschli by Sommerstorff and Jarno, Dudgeon by Wiene and Wehrlin, Napoleon by Reinhardt, Morell by Reicher, Valentine by Korff, Cleopatra by Eysoldt, and Cæsar by Steinrück. "*Helden*" ("Arms and the Man") was successfully produced at Copenhagen by its Danish translator, the distinguished scholar, Dr. Carl Mantzius; and "*Ein Teufelskerl*" met with favor on the principal stage of Buda Pesth. "Candida" was praised in Paris as a new solution of the feminist problem; and in St. Petersburg reviews, Mr. Shaw was rated far above Pinero and Jones, and elevated to the pedestal of European fame. In England, justly enough, in view of the injustice long done Mr. Shaw by the es-

tablished theatrical managements of London's West End, a veritable "Shaw festival" was inaugurated at the Royal Court Theatre in 1904-5, under the auspices of Mr. J. E. Vedrenne, a manager of high artistic sensibility, and Mr. H. Granville Barker, one of England's most brilliant and versatile young actors of the modern school. "John Bull's Other Island," dubbed a "masterpiece of comedy" by staid old "Blackwood's," captivated the culture and fashion of London, headed by the King, the premier, Mr. Balfour, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Since that time the ablest plays of Mr. Shaw, especially those which are distinctly *du théâtre,* have been successfully produced under the Vedrenne-Barker management. Mr. Shaw's plays are now being translated into French, German, Danish and Norwegian; and a comprehensive biography of him promises within the year to appear simultaneously in England and America.*

Not lightly to be dismissed is this mass of evidence in support of the contention, made in certain quarters, that Mr. Shaw is the ablest among living British dramatists. Yet, such a contention could scarcely be expected to pass unchallenged in England, where Mr. Pinero is still enthusiastically hailed—by that audience to whom he has shrewdly made so many concessions—as the premier dramatist of Great Britain. It is only necessary to cast one's eyes over the whole group of British dramatists and briefly consider their reception abroad as interpreters of the world-movement, in order to dispose of their claims, as against those of Mr. Shaw. Every now and then, it is true, one sees on a foreign stage such broadly popular plays as "Charley's Aunt," "Trilby," "Sweet Lavender," "The Middleman" and "When We Were Twenty-One"; certain plays of Mr. Barrie and Mr. Phillips have recently been seen upon the German stage. When Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's "*Schattenspiel*" ("Masqueraders") was produced abroad it was regarded, aside from a few clever Ibsenic observations which it contained, as little better than crude melodrama. Mr. Pinero's "The Gay Lord Quex," produced at the Lessing Theatre, Berlin, on January 13th, 1900, was pro-

* The principal productions of Mr. Shaw's plays during the past dramatic season are as follows: "Man and Superman," Berlin and Vienna; "Mrs. Warren's Profession," Vienna; "Candida," Brussels; "The Doctor's Dilemma," Court Theatre, London (Granville Barker); "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," New York (Ellen Terry); "Cæsar and Cleopatra," New York (J. Forbes-Robertson).

nounced to be "*reichlich langweilig und . . . ein bedauerliches Zeichen für den Tiefstand des englischen Geschmack.*" After a visit to England for the purpose of studying the contemporary British drama, a prominent dramatic critic of St. Petersburg wrote a series of critical articles in the most advanced of Russian reviews, in which he railed at Mr. William Archer for claiming, on the strength of Mr. Pinero and Mr. Jones, that England does not now shrink from comparison with Continental Europe in matters dramatic. In this Russian critic's opinion, Mr. Shaw alone among contemporary British dramatists has struck a new note and brought a message for this and the coming generation. Mr. Pinero and Mr. Jones he finds Philistine to the core, attributing their success to their unconscious fidelity to the sentiments and prejudices of the middle class. Of the plays of Mr. Pinero, "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith," "Iris," "The Gay Lord Quex," "The Profligate," "The Magistrate," "Sweet Lavender" and possibly two or three more, have been produced abroad, with varying success, and sometimes virtual failure. Only "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," however —the toast of Archer, Brandes, Courtney, Filon—has taken a high and fixed place in Continental repertory, it appears; and upon this play alone, regarded by many able critics as lacking in the essential elements of great tragedy, rests Mr. Pinero's claim to recognition, by foreign critics and public, as the premier dramatist of Great Britain. Fittingly enough, Mr. Shaw's only rival in the matter of European laurels is his fellow countryman and fellow townsman, Oscar Wilde, generally regarded abroad as a "World-Poet." Not without its touch of humor is the significant circumstance that the British drama gains its greatest stage triumphs abroad, not through the works of English dramatists championed by Archer, Walkley and Courtney, but through the works of countrymen of Swift and Sheridan, Goldsmith and Lever—of two Irishmen!* It may, of course, be true, as able

* As testimony to the entrance of Wilde and Shaw into European place and fame, compare the recent utterance of the distinguished critic, Dr. Carl Hagemann (*"Aufgaben des modernen Theaters"*): *"Neben den anerkannten Vertretern der Bühne der Lebenden (Ibsen, Hauptmann, Schnitzler und andere — im Musikdrama: Wagner) müssen auch die Jüngeren und Jüngsten erscheinen (alle die Wedekind, Hoffmannsthal, Vollmoeller, Eulenberg, Wilde, Shaw, Strindberg—im Musikdrama: Strauss, Schillings, Humperdinck, Weingartner, Pfitzner, Blech, Siegfried Wagner)."*

critics have asserted, that Mr. Henry Arthur Jones is "the most English of living dramatic authors, the one who expresses most brilliantly and most sincerely the spirit of his generation and his race"; and that Mr. Arthur Wing Pinero is "the one English playwright in whom the realistic genius of the nineteenth century finds full and adequate expression." The attitude of Mr. Jones is best summed up in his own view that, in all matters of the modern drama, England is no better than a parish, "with 'parochial' judgments, 'parochial' instincts, and 'parochial' ways of looking at things"; yet not the width of his views, nor the breadth of his ideas, nor the solid forthrightness of his art has yet enabled his plays successfully to span the Channel. With all his debonair and facile skill, his rhythmical undulation of emotional process, his intuitive instinct for dramatic values, and, above all, that "immense correspondence with life" which he effects with such realistic, yet artistic, sincerity, Mr. Pinero lacks the indispensable intellectual detachment, the supreme volitive conviction which must ineffaceably stamp the philosophic interpreter of modern life. Eye on the public, ear to the ground, these two men of talent dare to write plays which have conclusions but no *dénouements,* lightly and cynically compromise with morality, and find much profit in tossing huge chunks of crudely Philistine religious sentiment to that coy monster, the British public.

Mr. Shaw, it seems to me, is the most versatile and cosmopolitan genius in the drama of ideas that Great Britain has yet produced. It is not enough to say that his own frankly egoistic view of himself indubitably supports this estimate. The question here is not what Mr. Bernard Shaw may chance to think, or at least say he thinks, about himself: it is a question of fact. As a playwright, Mr. Shaw demands a distinct redistribution of dramatic values; lacking this, his dramatic career is a mere comedy, and he the Autolycus of the piece. Sympathetically appreciated in the spirit of the evolutional trend of modern, even ultra-modern, drama, he is a figure of unusual significance. Rigidly judged according to the conventional and popular canons of dramatic art, he runs the risk of being regarded as a charlatan and an impostor.

Whether as yet accurately formulated in standard works of dramatic criticism or not, the fact remains that a clear and demarcative line of division runs across the drama of to-day. On

one side of this line fall that vast majority of plays—serious drama, comedy, melodrama, farce—which accord more or less rigidly with the established canons and authoritative traditions of dramatic art. On the other side fall the persistently crescent minority of plays which break away from the old conventions and set up new precedents for formulation by the Freytag of the future. In the first class are found those works of art which are founded upon emotion, live solely in and for the dramatic moment, and treat of the universal themes of time and age, character and destiny, life and death. They receive their impulse from eternal and enduring, rather than from topical or transitory, aspects of human life; and draw their inspiration as much, if not more, from the literature of the past as from the human pageant of the present. In the second class are found those works which start into life through the quickening touch of the contemporary; which seek an interpretation of society through the illuminative, transmutative intermediaries of all that is newest, most vitally fecund, most prophetic in the science, sociology, art and religion of to-day; and which endeavor, through faithful portraiture of the present, to detect and reveal the traits and qualities of human nature in its permanent and immutable aspects. The authors of such works find their themes chiefly in the crucial instances of to-day, the conflict of humanity with current institutions, of human wills with existent circumstances, and they have for their end a humanitarian ideal: the exposure of civic abuse, the redress of social wrong, and the regeneration, redemption and reform of society—not less than artistic fidelity to fact, satiric unmasking of human folly, and veritistic embodiment of human passion. To the one class belong Shakespeare, Calderon, Schiller, Rostand; to the other, Charles Reade, Ibsen, Gorki, Brieux. It is a fundamental characteristic of Bernard Shaw that he belongs to the second class—in this respect he is sealed of the tribe of Rousseau, Dumas *fils*, Zola and Tolstoi.

Through the powerful social thrust of modern art, there has forged to the front a new and disquieting force. As an isolated phenomenon, this force has occasionally made its appearance in the past; but as a distinct genus it may justly be regarded as a creation of the new social order. To scoff at rather than to study, to dismiss cavalierly rather than to examine conscientiously, this new force, were as short-sighted and senseless as to deny its exist-

ence. We are in duty bound to consider and to weigh, carefully and critically, the claims of this "dramatist of the future" as opposed to the classic virtues of the dramatist working frankly in the manner of tradition. The dramatist who conforms to popular and critical standards is an artist facile in revealing either character in action or action in character, invariable in interpreting life from the side of the emotions, and resolute in imaging drama as a true conflict of wills—in a word, the artist gifted with what the French so aptly term *la doigté du dramaturge.* He recognizes the drama as the most impersonal of the arts, and sedulously devotes himself to the realization of Victor Hugo's dictum that dramatic art consists in being somebody else. On the other hand, the new type of dramatist—the dramatist of the future, if you will—is no less an artist than the other; his primal distinction is his demand for that large independence of rules and systems which Turgenev posited as the indispensable requisite of great art. Just as Zola enlarged the conception of the function of the novel, sublimating it into a powerful and far-reaching instrument for social and moral propagandism, so this new dramaturgic iconoclast demands the stage as an instrumentality for the exposition, diffusion and wide dissemination of his views and theories—upon standards of morality, rules of conduct, codes of ethics and philosophies of life. With him there is no question of importing the methods of the blue book into the drama; nor would he, in any broad sense, idly shirk what Walter Pater terms the responsibility of the artist to his material. He accepts the natural limitations, not the mechanical restrictions, of his art; he does not seek to appropriate the privileges, while refusing to shoulder the responsibilities, of his medium. His distinction arises from his discovery of the hackneyed, but ever-alarming and heretical, truth, that life is greater than art. For art's sake alone he refuses to exist, with strange perversity insisting that he lives not only for the sake of art, but also for the sake of humanity.

That subtle critic, Mr. A. B. Walkley, writes:

"After all, we must recall this truth: the primordial function of the artist—whatever his means of artistic expression—is to be a purveyor of pleasure, and the man who can give us a refined intellectual pleasure or a pleasure of moral nature or of social sympathy, or else a pleasure which arises from being given an unexpected or wider outlook upon life

—this man imparts to us a series of delicate and moving sensations which the spectacle simply of technical address, of theatrical talent, can never inspire. And this man is no other than Bernard Shaw."*

It is vivid, then, that Bernard Shaw does not appeal to us primarily as a dramatist. In his plays we look almost in vain for those crucial emotional conjunctures, those climactic soul crises, which dramatic critics announce to be the criteria of authentic drama—the *scène à faire* of a Sarcey or a Brunetière. His fundamental claim to our attention consists in his effort toward the destruction of false ideals and of the illusions which obsess the soul of man. The false ideals which lead men astray and blind them to a sense of the real truth are the bane of his existence. He conceives it his function to tear the mask of idealism from the face of fact. In his attack upon illusions, he is neither so blind nor so narrow as not to realize their far-reaching, and oftentimes beneficent, effect. A few years ago, Mr. Shaw wrote in *"L'Humanité Nouvelle"*:

"Suppress that phase of human activity which consists in the pursuit of illusions, and you suppress the greatest force in the world. Do not suppose that the pursuit of illusions is a vain pursuit: on the contrary, an illusion can no more exist without reality than a shadow without an object. Unfortunately the majority of men are so constituted that reality repels, while illusions attract them."

With acute psychologic insight, he draws a distinction between two classes of illusions: those which flatter, and those which are indispensable. By flattering illusions he understands those which encourage us to make efforts to attain things which we do not know how to appreciate in their simple reality; either they reconcile us to our lot, or else to actions we are obliged to take against our conscience. These are, indeed, deplorable consequences in the eyes of the humanitarian meliorist who believes that to be reconciled to one's lot is the worst fate that can befall mankind, and who once said that the one real tragedy in life is the being used by personally minded men for purposes which you yourself recognize to be base. He does, however, recognize the value of a certain class of illusions, the indispensable illusions—the masks that must clothe reality before it can awake the interest of man, or attract his attention, or even be perceived by him. Such, for appropriate example, is the illusion of the Socialist, who always sees Labor as a martyr crucified between the

* "*Le Temps*," August 28th, 1905.

two thieves of Capital; his enthusiasm is kept at fever-heat by the consciousness that the laborer is always a model of thrift and sobriety, while the capitalist is a tyrant, an assassin and a scoundrel! Were Socialism compelled to stand or fall upon the strength and stability of its economic stamina and sociologic structure alone, instead of upon its illusive appeal to the passion of humanity for a cause, with the concomitant allurement of an impending revolution, its fate would indubitably be sealed.

The *métier* of Bernard Shaw is the destruction, not of the indispensable illusions which support the social structure and ultimately make for the uplift of humanity, but of those treacherously flattering illusions which ensnare men in the toils of an existence for which they have not the requisite passion, courage, faith, endurance and self-restraint. "In my plays," Mr. Shaw recently said in the Vienna "*Zeit*," "you will not be teased and plagued with happiness, goodness and virtue, or with crime and romance, or indeed with any senseless thing of that sort. My plays have only one subject: life; and only one attribute: interest in life." It is a mistake of the distinguished German dramatic critic, Herr Heinrich Stümcke, to aver that the quintessence of Shaw is *nil admirari*. It would be far nearer the truth to say that he wonders at everything in this demented, moonstruck world. He taps the moral coin of the realm, only to find it a base counterfeit. He examines the pages of history, with all its boast of science and philosophy, and is staggered by its injustice, its heartless half-truths, and the colossal error of its presentation merely as the biographies of great men. This born enemy of the Cornelian tragedy, as the brilliant German, Alfred Kerr, has termed him, dangles the heroes of history before our horrified eyes and, with inexplicable irreverence, exhibits the Supermen of the world as human beings, rather than fantastic figures in a pantheon—as human creatures in whom the elements are strangely mixed, of good and evil, of cowardice and bravery, of vanity and simplicity, of cruelty and clemency, of pettiness and greatness. In rebuttal he sounds the pæan of the nameless —the obscure genius, the unknown hero, the rare forgotten spirit —some stern, silent Carton or some mute, inglorious Milton. The law of contrasts is the *motif* of his art. He is never so brilliant as in the portrayal of opposites.

With the transcendent egotism of the genius, he unhesitatingly

claims to see more clearly than humanity at large, having ever fought illusion, denied the ideal, and scorned to call things by other than their real names. As Hermann Bahr has said, Bernard Shaw possesses in rich measure the remarkable and exceptional talent of the great artist-critic: the ability to arouse the whole state, the whole nation against him. In his capacity of realistic critic of contemporary civilization, he is neither surprised nor confounded to encounter scepticism on all hands. Indeed, he is wise enough to expect it, since he has observed that, when reality at last presents itself to men nourished on dramatic illusions, they have lost the power to recognize it. This opposition only fires Shaw the more; like the kite, as some one has said, he rises most successfully when the *popularis aura* is against him. Thus we see him always in search of what Walter Pater was fond of calling "*la vraie vérité*," challenging the old formulas with the new ideas, transvaluing moral values with Nietzschean fervor, and bidding humanity stand from behind its artificial barriers of custom, law, religion and morality, and dare to speak and live the truth. Like a highwayman, he is ever "holding up" humanity with his insistent and vastly annoying "Stand and deliver!"

Bernard Shaw, as Alfred Kerr has put it, is a distinct ethical gain for our generation. His prime characteristic as a propagandist—and his deficiency as a dramatist, so called—is found in his assertion that the quintessential function of comedy is the destruction of old-established morals. Hence it is that his plays are conceived in a militant spirit—in the Molièresque key of "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*," or the Ibsenic key of "An Enemy of the People." Opposition is the very breath of his nostrils. In his comedies he hales the seven cardinal virtues before the bar of his "cynical" realism, and exposes the moral fraudulency which they conceal. Against the ideal of self-abnegation, the Christian ideal that supreme goodness is supreme martyrdom, he sets the ideal of self-realization, the Nietzschean ideal that supreme greatness is supreme individualism. Romantic sentiment — synonymous in his opinion with the sensualistic caterwaulings abhorred of Thomas Huxley—he would replace by pure science in physics —the attitude of a Lester Ward or a Westermarck. To the ideal of heroism—the search for the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth—he opposes the practicality of common sense, the efficient and executive ability of a Kitchener or a Grant. To the

evolutionary hypothesis of a Darwin, the survival of the fittest of a Spencer, he opposes the selective breeding of a Galton, the predeterminative creation of a Burbank or a Nietzsche.

The startling feature of his plays is their argumentative and controversial character. They are expository lectures, in dramatic form, on the "Shavian philosophy." One of his plays he has actually sub-entitled: "A Discussion in Three Acts." And yet, with consummate shrewdness, Mr. Shaw fully realizes that, if the dramatist take sides in a dramatic wrangle, he is lost. A sense of the most absolute fairness and impartiality pervades and dominates his plays. Every character has his say without let or hindrance; and the whole play is signalized by the "honesty of its dialectic." By means of elaborate elucidative prefaces, lacking which certain subtler intentions in his plays would pass unnoticed, by means of elaborate stage directions, which mirror with remarkable delicacy and finish the minutest features of the author's conception, Mr. Shaw adds vastly to the effectiveness and carrying power of his plays, creating of his readers a sort of Shavian microcosm. Mr. Shaw's brilliant essays at writing *die Komödie der Zeit* lead Hermann Bahr to hope that he will influence "our whole German development," and impel him to rank Shaw without hesitation as the equal of Hauptmann and Schnitzler. "He teaches us the lesson of renunciation—to know that we never can know all that most intimately concerns us, to know that we cannot grasp absolute truth, but only our perception thereof—never reality, but only appearance, the appearance of an actual life which leaves a bitter-sweet after-taste upon our tongue." In common with the critic G. K. Chesterton, Shaw possesses in rare degree the gift of adapting means to end—the unerring sense for the right word in the right place. Like the ablest French writers, notably Henry Becque, he has learned the secret of reaching the clearest solution by the simplest means.

From the standpoint of the dramatic critic, the chief defect of Mr. Shaw as dramatist is that his plays often exhibit not so much character in conflict as views of life in animated opposition. It is Mr. Shaw's *idée fixe* that, since Ibsen has lived and written, the drama can never be anything more than the play of ideas. Doubtless because of his belief that philosophic content is the touchstone of real greatness in art—that Bunyan is greater than Shakespeare, Blake than Lamb, Ibsen than Swinburne, Shaw

than Pinero—his plays have something of the rigidity of theses. The plays of this ideologue always *donnent à penser furieusement.* His intellect is so radioactive, his psychic prevision so acute that his plays not infrequently suffer from the malady of the *à priori;* sometimes they are even stricken down with what Wagner called the incurable disease of thought.

In Bernard Shaw we discern the marvellous versatility of the modern critic, capable of making himself at home in any nationality and in any age. But whether he is giving us an Offenbachian Egypt, a comic-opera Bulgaria, a melodramatic America, or an imaginary Morocco, the result is the same: a portrayal of human nature, a criticism of life, penetrating, engaging, true. He possesses in rich measure the supreme faculty of the critic: "*in fremden Seelengehäuse hineinzuschlüpfen,*" as Dr. Max Meyerfeld, the German champion of Wilde, has neatly put it. One of his most diverting traits as a humorist—and a defect as a dramatist—is his idiosyncrasy for self-mockery and self-puffery. There is nothing, not even himself, about which he will not jest; for, to use an Oscarism, he respects life too deeply to discuss it seriously. He is a master of that art of burlesque which, in Brunetière's harsh characterization, consists "in the expansion of the ego in the joyous satisfaction of its own vulgarity." One of the truest words, spoken in jest, is Mr. Shaw's confession that the main obstacle to the performance of his plays has been—himself! In contradistinction to the classic formula—that the drama should be the most impersonal of the arts—Mr. Shaw's drama may be defined as a revelation of the personality of Mr. Shaw. It is his claim that he sees life clearly; but how strangely unfamiliar many things appear after they have been filtered through the Shavian temperament! "We must agree with him," concludes M. Filon, "and accept—or reject—the dramatic work of Mr. Shaw as it is, namely, as the expression of the ideas, sentiments and fantasies of Mr. Shaw!"

Of one thing at least there can be no question: that Bernard Shaw is the most versatile and cosmopolitan genius in the drama of ideas that Great Britain has yet produced. No juster or more significant characterization of this man can be made than that he is a penetrating and astute critic of contemporary civilization. He is typical of this disquieting century—with its intellectual brilliancy, its ironic nonsense, its flippant humor, its devouring

scepticism, its profound social and religious unrest. The relentless thinking, the large perception of the comic, which stamp this man, are interpenetrated with "the ironic consciousness of the twentieth century." In him rages the dæmonic, half-insensate intuition of a Blake, with his seer's faculty for inverted truism; while the close, detective cleverness of his ironic paradoxes demonstrates him to be a Becque upon whom has fallen the mantle of a Gilbert. In the limning of character, the mordantly revelative strokes of a Hogarth, shaded by the lighter pencil of a Gavarni, pronounce him to be a realist of satiric portraiture. The enticingly audacious impudence of a Robertson, with his mercurial transitions and electric contrasts, is united with the exquisite effrontery of a Whistler, with his devastating *jeux d'esprit* and the *ridentem dicere verum.* If he is a Celtic *Molière de nos jours,* it is a Molière into whom has passed the insouciant spirit of a Wilde. If Bernard Shaw is the Irish Ibsen, it is, as Eduard Bernstein has said a laughing Ibsen—looking out upon a half-mad world with the riant eyes of a Heine, a Chamfort, or a Sheridan.

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